

27 Jan 1986

Lunch with SU Consul General Valentin Kamanev, Gennady German and Pat; discussion of Gorbachev proposal.

1. I saw little likelihood of any agreement being signed under Reagan (other than cosmetic agreements without much substance). But the Gorbachev proposal had aspects that boded well for substantive agreements that might be achieved after Reagan: a) his style, forthrightness, lack of rhetoric, initiative, persistence in pressing for major arms control despite Reagan's disappointing lack of response so far; (b) his flexibility, in adopting what was essentially a Reagan proposal--the zero option in Europe--even though his predecessors had rejected it, probably for that very reason (though of course, there were now Pershing II's actually deployed, to be traded against SS-20s); c) the comprehensiveness of the approach, not only in the aim of total abolition (I did not comment on the problematic nature of this "goal"), but in the first two stages covering the next ten years.

2. In its latter aspect of comprehensiveness, Gorbachev's proposal has more in common with the Freeze than with traditional arms control measures. It aims at a decisive, radical transformation of the nuclear postures on both sides: a critical increase in stability, at much lower levels, with sharply restricted roles for nuclear weapons. This applies whether Gorbachev's explicit goal of the total abolition of nuclear weapons is achieved by the end of the millenium or not, or even whether it is maintained as a goal or replaced in that role by some concept of stable, restricted deterrence. In either case Gorbachev's Phases I and II lead directly away--as is urgently necessary--from the current course toward greatly heightened instability, much larger nuclear inventories and expanded roles for nuclear weapons (including strategic defense), all adding up to an irreversible arms race and a higher risk of nuclear war.

3. To assure that we move toward greater stability (less risk of nuclear war arising out of a crisis or conventional war) Gorbachev's first proposition of a 50% reduction in strategic offensive forces (basically George Kennan's proposal: see Leon Sigal's critique, Foreign Policy, #44, Fall '81) needs to be supplemented, or spelled out, or perhaps modified, by specifying types of weapons and specific systems to be removed sequentially. In technical terms, the objective must be to lower the ratio of counterforce warheads to targetable launchers: more generally, to reduce the ability of either side to disarm the other in a preemptive first strike. ("Reduction," per se, would not necessarily achieve this; indeed, some of Reagan's START proposals would actually worsen this ratio, increasing incentives to strike first in a crisis, and thus--given the likely persistence of such crises--raising the risk of nuclear war.)

Moreover, reductions of existing counterforce systems would not be adequate if they were accompanied--as Reagan's START proposals would presume and Gorbachev's current proposal would

allow--by the addition of new weapons with counterforce capability, such as SLBMs with the characteristics of the Trident II/D5. Thus it is essential to complement proposals for reductions, such as both sides have now made, with a mutual ban on testing and deployment of new MIRVd missiles, both ICBMs and SLBMs. (Any new missiles can be presumed, from now on, to have counterforce accuracy against hard silos.) This would cover the MX and SS-24, as well as the Trident II/D5 and any future Soviet counterpart.

4. I suggested that it would be both sound in terms of Soviet security interests and powerful in terms of political symbols for Gorbachev to match his flexibility in his offer to bargain away all the SS-20s by specifying a desire to bargain away all his SS-18s and other heavy MIRVd missiles. Obviously the aim would not be to leave the US with an "advantage"; as with the SS-20s, the proper attitude should be, "What can we get, what must we demand, for giving away all of them?" In effect, the SS-18s, 19s and the new SS-24s (and other new MIRVd ICBMs under development, along with future MIRVd SLBMs comparable to Trident II, D5) should be traded against MX and D5.

5. Actually, I was not proposing that this process be conceived as trading one weapon or set of weapons against another, in the spirit of SALT II. Rather, the objective should be to achieve the elimination in the earliest stages of disarmament of the most destabilizing weapons: accurate, MIRVd ICBMs and SLBMs, which with their counterforce capability both threaten and invite preemptive first strikes. Where this differs from both Reagan's and Gorbachev's formal proposals is in specifying the specific type of weapon that must be foregone or destroyed, rather than merely setting ceilings on numbers and leaving up to each party which systems to retain. Reagan has invited this approach, in a sense, by focussing attention on the SS-18s, and more recently the SS-24s, complaining explicitly about their counterforce, first-strike characteristics. But in fact his START proposals fail to specify or assure that the SS-18s, 19s or 24s be eliminated from Soviet inventories. From the point of view of stability it is desirable that the Soviet threat against US land-based missiles be removed, and disarmament proposals should reflect this more concretely than either START or the new Soviet proposals do.

5. What is even more important for stability (because of the predominant Soviet reliance on land-based missiles) is that the US forego a combination of MX and Trident II/D5 missiles that would allow major or total coverage of all Soviet ICBMs in a US preemptive strike. It is as important for US security to eschew this capability as it is for the Soviets, since its possession would incline both sides to consider preemption earlier and more seriously in a crisis.

While many US Congresspersons understand this point for the MX, few of them do for the D5. They have been misled by the fact that the Trident submarine itself is not targetable, from which

they mistakenly infer that the Trident II missile poses no problems for stability. Actually, the programmed numbers of D5 missiles (Trident II), by threatening the entire Soviet force of ICBMs (3/4 of their warheads), put the Soviets under the same pressure to institute dangerous launch-on-warning procedures and to consider preemption in a crisis as would a comparable force of MX missiles.

To be sure, the Trident missiles, whether Trident I (C4) or Trident II, cannot themselves be targeted in such a preemptive strike as can the MX in fixed silos. But when the prospect that the Trident II might actually be launched increases--and its very development and deployment, given its characteristics and capabilities, helps raise this fear in a crisis, which indeed it is meant to do--the Soviets are challenged to "use or lose" their ICBMs, to use them preemptively in a damage-limiting role against those land-based forces and command and control capabilities that they can target, including MX and the Trident subs in port.

6. For several years I have told every Soviet official I have met: "You should be very concerned about the Trident II; you should be trying to stop it, and be willing to make major concessions to do so." Because of the large numbers programmed (which the MX, with its vulnerability, was not able to achieve in Congressional authorizations) it represents the first weapon on either side (since the '60's) to put the majority of the adversary's offensive forces at risk. But in fact the Soviets have said very little about it publicly. I have found this somewhat puzzling. Earlier an explanation given by Soviet officials was that the immediate problem was the imminent deployment of the Pershing IIs in Europe, and just beyond that the testing and deployment of MX (though they did not give MX the public attention of the Pershing II, either). The testing and deployment of Trident II was allegedly too far off; it was necessary to concentrate on the problems of the earlier systems first. But the Pershing battle in Europe was lost, the MX fight in Congress compromised, and now Trident II tests are approaching (if they are not already underway).

6. Meanwhile, the accuracy of the C4 (Trident I missile), which is already deployed, is claimed to be twice that predicted in its operational tests. I did not go into this with Kamanev, but according to John Pike of FAS, its design CEP was 1500 feet, but it is showing a CEP in tests of 600-700 feet, which is comparable to the 500 feet of advanced Minuteman III. (This relies on stellar inertial guidance; earlier thoughts of using mid-course guidance using NAVSTAR have apparently been dropped). This gives C4 (which has a 100 KT warhead) a counterforce capability against most Soviet hard silos. It does not, however, give it a significant kill probability against the hardest Soviet silos, the 6000 psi of SS-18 or 19 silos. So the D5, which can destroy these silos, is not redundant; and stopping the D5 still makes a major contribution to stability.

7. There is very little support in Congress for stopping Trident II, despite Tom Downey's efforts, comparable to the resistance to MX. In fact, the struggle against MX actually increased support for Trident II; Congresspersons don't want to "oppose everything" in the way of weapons, when they reject one they want to balance that off by supporting another, and the invulnerable Trident II with its counterforce capability offers itself as the perfect super-weapon to support, to show their judiciousness. (To say this is to say that most Congresspersons do not understand the argument about stability, in a way that they can apply consistently, nor the undesirability of "matching" Soviet counterforce capability against US land-based forces (which are actually redundant from the point of view of deterrence, constituting only 1/4 of US offensive warheads) by acquiring a counterforce capability against the full Soviet land-based force, on which their retaliatory capability depends.

Thus, there has never been any prospect of averting the testing or deployment of D5 on a US unilateral basis, as there was a good prospect of stopping the MX unilaterally. (At this point, Congress has imposed a ceiling on the numbers of MX--50-- unilaterally, i.e., without any matching concession by the Soviets. The MX, with its bizarre basing schemes and its basic vulnerability, was really the only weapon that offered arms opponents any promise of stopping it unilaterally, other than, earlier, the B-1).

8. The Trident II missile can only be stopped bilaterally. This can't be done by trading it off against a comparable Soviet missile directly, since no comparable Soviet missile will be tested until long after the Trident II is ready for deployment. It can only be done as part of an overall arms control package in which the Trident II is foreclosed as part of a set of US concessions roughly balanced by a set of Soviet concessions. A comprehensive mutual Freeze covering all new nuclear weapons would accomplish this. So would a ban on all new MIRVd ICBMs and SLBMs, testing and deployment; this would cover the MX and the SS-24, as well as Trident IIs on both sides (allowing new single-warhead missiles, which do not threaten stability, such as the Midgetman or the new Soviet SS-25). This last is an approach I proposed to Deputy Ambassador Sokolov in May, 1985 and to Ambassador Victor Issraelyan in Geneva in September, suggesting that it be launched by a Soviet moratorium--which the US would be invited to join--on the flight testing and deployment of all new MIRVd ICBMs and SLBMs.

The argument for this proposal in 1985 was the same as that indicated above. There would be resistance in Congress to any arms control approach that precluded the D5, which is now generally regarded as both desirable and politically unstoppable. Moreover, stopping the SS-24 might not be regarded as an adequate reward, since Soviet counterforce capability against the Minutemen is already vastly redundant: i.e., it adds nothing to Soviet first-strike capability. (The Reagan Administration

concern about the SS-24 is based on its mobility; they do not draw attention to the fact that this increases its survivability, thus enhancing stability by reducing U.S. first-strike capability)

But the prospect of averting a Soviet counterpart to D5--a solid-fuel MIRVd SLBM with high accuracy, giving it counterforce capability against hardened silos, and also capable of close-in deployment giving it a short time of flight--is in fact very important to stability and US security, and it should be possible to make this clear to Congress. The Scowcroft Commission Report asserted that there was presently no "window of vulnerability" of the sort Reagan has persistently described. Their reasoning amounted to saying that this was true because of the current lack of a Soviet D5 with these capabilities. A "window of vulnerability" with respect to the 50% of US warheads deployed on ICBMs and bombers would emerge, the Scowcroft Commission reported, when the Soviets had a capability to attack both bomber bases and ICBMs with submarine missiles with counterforce accuracy and short time of flight: i.e., when the Soviets had an equivalent to the D5 missile.

Even if this is not a prospect till the mid-90's, it is sure to come if the arms race is continued and the D5 is deployed. Neither the Scowcroft Commission nor any of Reagan's START proposals, in fact, purport in any way to avert this development, despite their supposed horror of such a "window of vulnerability." There is no prospect of averting a Soviet D5 that permits the US D5 to be deployed; Congress should not find it difficult to comprehend this. In contrast to the Scowcroft and Reagan proposals, this reduction in stability would be averted either by a comprehensive Freeze or by a ban on new MIRVd missiles. Likewise, by the approach described here, which would include a ban on new MIRVd missiles along with "Phase I reductions" that specifically focussed, at the outset, on existing MIRVd missiles with hard-silo counterforce capability.